

couldn't have a strong and effective Government and reduce the size and burden of Government. When you heard Tom say that the Vice President ran our reinventing Government plan—this is one of those—if you do a survey on this, people say, “I don't care, I still don't believe it.” People do not believe it, but we have the smallest Federal establishment since 1962 when John Kennedy was President. We have eliminated hundreds of programs, and you can't name one of them. I'll give \$5 to anybody in this audience who can name two of the hundreds of programs we have eliminated. And we have a more vigorous, more effective Government.

We've got the longest peacetime expansion in history, the lowest crime rate in 26 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, very high wage growth, high business startups, highest homeownership in history, the lowest minority unemployment in history—all that is only evidence of the important thing: All elections are about tomorrow. All elections are about tomorrow. And a good record is only evidence of what will be good in the future—however, very important evidence.

And many of these things we've had to fight with our friends on the other side, and Tom Harkin was always leading the fight. We said we could lower the crime rate, but you had to help these communities put police on the street and you had to take more guns out of the hands of criminals. Well, they said, “If you try to put 100,000 police on the street, it wouldn't make a lick of difference. And if we checked the backgrounds of people that tried to buy handguns in gun shows, all you would do is make the hunters mad, and criminals didn't buy guns at gun shows, anyway.” Well, years later, we haven't inconvenienced a single hunter, and 400,000 people—400,000 people—were not able to buy guns, because of their criminal backgrounds, at gun stores. So our arguments were right, and theirs were wrong.

They said we couldn't balance the budget, and we were going to provoke a recession. But we balanced the budget, biggest surplus in history, and we doubled our investment in education while we were doing it. So we have evidence here.

So I say to you as you think about the future of your State and Nation, there is evidence here. And what I want to say to you is, Tom Harkin and I—I'm not running for anything and he's not running for anything right yet—[laughter]—but we and all the people that are running who are in public office, we're still drawing a paycheck from you every 2 weeks, and we should show up for work, and we should do things. I tell all the Republicans and Democrats in Washington all the time, if we agreed on everything I'm asking us to agree on, there would still be stuff for us to fight about. There will always be something to have a next election on. But we get hired to show up for work.

Now, the big question we have before us today is: What are we going to do with the surplus; what are we going to do with this period of bounty we have? And I would argue—I don't want to repeat my whole State of the Union Address, but I want to tell you, I would argue three things for sure. Number one, we ought to do whatever we can to deal with the aging of America, because when the baby boomers retire, we're going to have more people retired and fewer people working to support them. And if you want the seniors of this country to be able to have their Social Security and their Medicare, and you want them to have it in a way that is secure and does not bankrupt their children so they can't afford to raise their grandchildren, now is the time to set aside most of this surplus to save Social Security and Medicare and provide a prescription drug benefit with Medicare. So I think that is a big deal.

The second thing I think we ought to do is everything we can to keep this economy going and then, to reach out and touch the people who have not been affected by the recovery. And let me just say on the first, the way I want to save Social Security and Medicare will keep us from spending that surplus and devote the interest savings on the surplus to making Social Security last longer, so we'll make Social Security last for more than 50 years, make Medicare last for more than 25 years, and make the country debt-free in 15 years, for the first time since 1835. Now, these are big things. We should not wait for another election to deal with these big things.

On the economy, the last thing we've got to do is to try to reach the people that aren't affected by the recovery. There are a lot of disabled people, as Tom would tell you, who want to go to work and could go to work. There are still people on welfare who want to go to work, who could go to work. There are whole regions of our country—from Appalachia to the Mississippi Delta to the Indian reservations to the inner city—that need new investment. And of course, there is the problem of the farm, which you are very well familiar with.

But consider the irony of the lowest unemployment rates in the country being in Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, all these farming States where we're at risk of losing a huge percentage of our family farmers unless there is both an emergency response and a different long-term course that they have available. So I say to you, yes, have the election; yes, have the debate; but let's keep on working for what's good for America, and let's not avoid the big choices, let's not pretend that we don't have to make them.

We're in the shape we're in today because we made the tough choices and we kept at it, and that's what the country needs to do. And that's the gift I want to give you, is that when you see me, you think I'm working and not enjoying the sunshine of our prosperity.

The last point I want to make is this—I thought about this today when I was in Iowa. Politics is really personal to me. You know, in this debate we just had over the Patients' Bill of Rights, several doctors who are here today thanked me for that, thanked Tom for fighting for that. Look, here's the issue: More people than not are in managed care plans. A lot of them have done a lot of good; they've cut down on a lot of inflation and health care costs. But if your doctor says you need to see a specialist, no accountant should be able to stop your doctor from sending you to a specialist. If you get hit in an accident, you ought not to have to go by the nearest hospital to one that's farther away because that's the one covered by your managed care plan. Now, if you are working for a small business and your small business—your employer has to change coverage at some point and you're 6 months into a difficult pregnancy, you ought not to have to

get another ob-gyn to finish your pregnancy. If you are halfway through a difficult chemotherapy treatment, you ought not have to get another oncologist to finish your treatment. Now, every physician in this audience will tell you this happens all the time in America. This is not some radical notion; this happens all the time. So all we said was that basically everybody in America ought to have the same protections that I gave all the people in the Federal programs—Medicare, Medicaid, the Federal health employees program, the veterans program—by Executive order. And we were actually attacked by our friends in the other party. Tom was attacked, because, they said, "Oh, you're relying on personal stories. You're trying to play on the emotions of the people." Well, get a life. *[Laughter]* I mean, what is politics about anyway? Why are we doing this?

Every time I come to Iowa, I think of two things. One of them I got hit right between the eyes with today. When I was here for the flood in 1993, I'd go out to sack my—you know, my sandbags, you were talking about that—I'd go out and do my sandbag deal. And I look up, and there is this child about so big, with a head about so big—huge bones coming out of her eyebrows—very short, large head, knobby elbows, gnarled knuckles, knobby knees. This child has brittle bone disease. She's 12 years old. She has been operated on already more than a dozen times. Her bones shatter at will. She has come all the way from Wisconsin to stand in the flood in Iowa to help people who are putting the sandbags up, literally risking her life.

So I talked to this kid and I said, "Where are you from?" And she said—and I said, "Well, how's your condition?" Because I've seen—you know, she's actually done pretty well. There are a lot of children who have that disease never get out of bed, they have to be prone for their whole life. But this kid is up walking. She said, "I told my parents I wanted to go down there." She said, "I can't hide my whole life. I've got to serve; I've got to be a citizen; I've got to do this like everybody else."

Then that child started coming to the National Institutes of Health for help. Tom Harkin—you know, all this money is put in

the NIH all these years. So am I playing on your emotions? You bet I am. What else is there? What else is life about? What is politics about? This child has a chance at life.

And you know what happened? Six years later I go to American University and give a speech, and here is this girl, beaming, a freshman at American University, still growing, still getting stronger, still out there taking chances, doing things other kids wouldn't do with those problems, being brave. We didn't—none of us—Tom Harkin and I didn't have a lick to do with her courage, her bravery, her heart, her soul, her character. But because of what he did, she had a better chance. She had a better chance.

And I'll tell you another story: 1992, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, huge rally we're having out in front of Quaker Oats. And I'm working the crowd—[laughter]—after the speech, grasping for votes. And there is this lady there, this tall white woman, holding an African-American baby. And I said, "Whose baby is this?" She said, "This is my baby." And I said, "Well, how did you get this baby?" She said, "From Miami." She said, "This child was born with AIDS, and no one would take her, and she was going to be homeless, and so I took her."

Now, this is a good story, right? But what you need to know is this woman was living in a rented apartment with her two kids because she had been left by her husband. And she barely had enough money to support her own kids, but she couldn't bear to see this child be left alone, so she took in the other child. Okay, fast-forward to today. Today, at that middle school, Mama was there, since remarried, doing fine, with her daughter, giving me a report on her son, holding that beautiful child who is almost too big for me to hold. And she has come repeatedly to the National Institutes of Health.

And I held her today, and I said, "Jimiya, how you doing?" She is so beautiful. And I have seen her a half a dozen times. She is so beautiful; and she said, "Oh, Mr. President, I'm giving myself my own shots, now and I'm going to be just fine."

Now, is this playing on your emotions? You bet it is. What is life about anyway? Tom Harkin didn't put a heart in that little girl or a heart in the mother. But she has a

chance because of the kind of things he's fought all his public life for. And it is a beautiful story.

So I just ask you to be faithful to your friend Tom Harkin, to fight for the things we believe in. If your friends and neighbors wonder whether the President is right or whether the Republicans are right in saying we ought to take all the non-Social Security surplus and spend it on a tax cut right now and make everybody happy right here before the election, tell them that you think we have earned the benefit of the doubt with our record, and that, you know, we should not squander this. We ought to think about our children's future. We ought to think about what we're going to do when the baby boomers retire. We ought to think about how we can make everybody a part of this economy. And remember the stories. That's part of what makes us who we are.

It's not about power. It's about ideas and action and, in the end, it's about people. When you breathe your last breath, you are not going to be thinking about what some arcane political philosophy was that you embraced. You're going to be thinking about who you liked, who you loved, how you felt when the seasons changed, and what you're proud of that you did for somebody else. And I want to be part of a political party that tries to give those gifts to America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Jerry and Linda Crawford; Gov. Thomas Vilsack of Iowa, and his wife, Christie; Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson of Iowa; Senator Harkin's wife, Ruth, former President and Chief Executive Officer, Overseas Private Investment Corporation; former Congressman Neal Smith and his wife, Beatrix; American University student Brianne Schwantes who suffers from brittle bone disease; and Laura Poisel and her adoptive daughter, Jimiya, who was born with AIDS. The President also referred to the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-127). A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

## Remarks at a Reception for Senator Tom Harkin in Des Moines

July 16, 1999

Thank you very much. First of all, I'm delighted to be in a true Iowa museum, the place where Tom Harkin went to his high school prom. I'll tell you, he is a silver-tongued devil, but when he started talking about bringing the love of his life to the high school prom, old Ruth said, "I don't know how he is going to get out of this one." [Laughter] Sure enough, there he was on his feet again, before you know it. [Laughter]

I want to thank many of you for many things. I want to thank my good friend Secretary Dick Riley for coming with me today and going to the school in Iowa and talking about the need to build or modernize thousands of new schools for America's children for the 21st century. I thank him. I want to thank my great friend, and Hillary's great friend, Congressman Leonard Boswell for going around with us today and for representing Iowa's farmers and workers and educators and children so well in the House of Representatives. And Dody, thank you for your 31 years of teaching. Thank you very much. Thank you, Rob Tully, for your role in making it fun to be a Democrat again in Iowa. Thank you. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Sally Pederson, for your leadership. And thank you, Jim Autry. And I'm glad you got a better office because you deserve it, Sally. Thank you. And I want to say to Governor Vilsack and to Christie, this has been a very impressive administration to watch from afar.

We were—everybody in the White House—Hillary and Al and Tipper and I and all of us who work there—we were thrilled when Tom was elected, and we have been so impressed by his intelligence and his energy and his direction and his leadership, and it's just quite amazing to watch unfold. You know, you could elect him for 32 years if you like and still be just trying to get even with the Republicans.

I want to thank Ruth Harkin for her service in our administration which she left for more lucrative fields, but I hope not more rewarding one. She did a wonderful job. Yes, give her a hand. [Applause]

I'm here basically for three reasons tonight. First, I want to thank the people of Iowa for being very, very good to me, to Hillary, to Al and Tipper Gore, to our whole crowd, for voting for us twice, in '92 and '96, for making us always welcome, for always telling us what was going on here and in the heartland of America. I will never forget that. I have been here a lot, and I have loved every trip.

We had several hundred people at the school we visited earlier today, and I told them all they should actually be quite glad to see me because I was the first person who had been here in weeks and weeks who wasn't running for everything. I just wanted to come see you and say hello and see how you were getting along.

The second thing I want to do is to thank Tom Harkin. You know, I didn't say this at the other place—Governor Vilsack asked me to repeat my speech. Since I didn't write it down, I have hardly any idea what I said; it's going to be hard to do. [Laughter] I want to tell you something. When Tom Harkin and I entered the primaries in '92, my mother was really the only person who thought I was going to win, and you know, we had this sort of spirited race, and I didn't come to Iowa because I didn't think I should, because you all were for him, and you should have been.

And I sort of admired Tom Harkin from afar, but you really get to know a person—and he—in Iowa you get to know a person, but you get to know a person if you just kind of travel around and you're out there, you're bone tired, and you're still trying to make one more speech, shake one more hand, go to one more forum. And then I was fortunate enough to be elected. He didn't have to do anything for me. I want you to know that on every bright and dark day of the last 6½ years, my wife and I have not had a better friend in the United States Senate than Tom Harkin. And I will never forget it.

I want you to know—I also want you to know, even more important, for everything that we have fought for that has made this a better, stronger country, that has given children a better future, that has helped to bring us together as one community, there is nobody in the Congress that has a better combination of intelligence and experience and

heart and sheer ability to get things done than Tom Harkin. He is a precious asset for Iowa and the United States, and I am glad you are here to support him tonight.

He was very generous, he talked about me going to Switzerland to speak for the children all over the world who are the subject of abusive child labor. It's the sort of thing a President is supposed to do. But a person could be elected and reelected Senator from Iowa and never say anything about abusive child labor around the world. Tom Harkin was out for that issue a long, long time before I was. I was there because of Tom Harkin and his leadership.

And today the Governor and Leonard and Tom and I, we sat around and we met with some farmers—and I want to say more about that in a minute—but we know we've got a terrible problem in farm country all over America. And you can be sure that when something is done to help America's farmers, Tom Harkin will be in the forefront of that. He won't be in the forefront of that. He won't be dragging up the rear; he'll be there pushing everybody to do more, to do better, to think through it. And he'll be—every time somebody wants to do something that doesn't make a lick of sense based on decades of history on the farm, he will be there to remind people to do the right thing by America's farmers.

You know, he says I've been a good President for the disabled of America. I hope I have been. But if I have been, half of it is because of what I learned from Tom Harkin.

Let me just close with this—because I hope you will think about this as caucusgoers, but also as American citizens. You have to ask yourself, why are you here tonight? Why do you have the political views you have? What really matters to you? What do you think politics is about? Is it about money and power, primarily, and the kicks you get if you get invited to the White House or the statehouse or whatever? Or is it about what I think it's about?

I'll tell you what I think it's about. I think politics is about ideas and action and people. And I believe that the reason the country is in the shape it's in today is in no small measure because we had a different set of ideas. We really believe that we could create

an America in the 21st century with opportunity for every person responsible enough to work for it, an America that was a community of people who were very different but had a common citizenship and a common humanity, an America that was leading the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity. We believe that. And we believe that we could go beyond the paralyzing debates that had put this country in a terrible hole in 1992, when we were out there running.

We thought you could improve the economy and improve the environment. We thought you could make it so people would succeed at work without being able—and still be able to succeed at home in the most important job any American has, raising children. We thought that you could be tough on crime without giving up personal liberty. We thought that you could have sensible gun control without interfering with people's right to hunting and fishing and sporting season. These are things we thought.

Now, we thought we could balance the budget and increase our investment in education. We thought we could cut the size of Government and increase its effectiveness and its impact in ordinary people's lives. And every step of the way, we were opposed by people who believe differently. And what I want to say today is that, yes, I'm glad that we've got 19 million new jobs, the longest peacetime expansion in history, a 30-year low in unemployment, a 30-year low in the welfare rolls, a 26-year low in the crime rolls, the highest homeownership in history, the lowest minority unemployment in history. I'm glad for all that. I'm glad. But at this moment, I tell you that the people hire us to win for them tomorrow. And if we did a good job yesterday, most taxpayers think that's what they were paying us to do.

And the reason I say that is, I am very grateful that I've had the chance to be your President and grateful that I have had a chance to be the instrument of this. But what we need to think about is, what are we going to do tomorrow? What are we going to do tomorrow? And in particular, what is our obligation at this moment of enormous prosperity when we went from having the biggest deficit in history in 1992 to the biggest surplus we've ever had? What are we going to